The Saturday Citizen

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PRESS AND TV

Let the critics have the facts

First the major U.S. television networks, now the press: President Nixon's chosen hatchet man, Vice-president Spiro Agnew, has declared open war on behalf of the administration against the opinion-makers of the mass media.

And more to the good, if the debate can be kept to respectable limits. At a time when the American people appear divided as never before on the war in Vietnam, and major social issues at home, a healthy questioning of the job that newsmen and commentators do can be both enlightening and helpful.

The same in-depth investigation of the media is ready to begin in Canada. The special Senate committee on mass media is scheduled to launch a four-month series of hearings into every facet of the communications industry on Dec. 9.

No one is more interested in the results, or as hopeful that they will be productive, than Canada's working newsmen and their publishers, whose corporate investment makes an economically viable free press possible.

But what is dangerous about the Agnew — or more clandestinely, Nixon — approach is the premise on which it is based: that by some sinister means, the American people are being deprived of the "facts" and fed instead a diet of destructive propaganda by an unelected "elite."

Intelligent Canadian newspaper readers and TV viewers will not be so naive as to accept that unproved theory, put forward as it is by partisan politicians with a giant axe to grind.

Antidote for bigness

To evaluate fully the long list of proposals brought forward by the interim school organization committee of the Ottawa board of education, one would have to step inside the school system and get the feel of it all.

The committee's report relates, in large part, to machinery the public never sees — a vast, administrative apparatus that ultimately sets a teaching-learning process into motion in thousands of Ottawa classrooms.

The new school system is very large, and spans the whole gamut of public school education. The greatest danger it faces is that its administration become faceless, inflexible and out of touch. And the supreme contribution of the ISOC report is that it spots this danger.

The proposal for decentralization of administration, for community groupings of schools to bring administration, teachers and parents into direct contact, is designed as a counter-strategy to overcome bigness. If this plan needs fleshing out still, it is basically one that should commend itself to all concerned.

A bishop mourned

Thousands of Ottawa residents, and thousands more in branches of the Canadian Legion across Canada, will be saddened by the death of Bishop John Anderson, the former dean and rector of Christ Church Cathedral.

A Military Cross winner in World War II, Bishop Anderson served as dominion president of the Legion during his eight-year stay in Ottawa. He returned to his native Manitoba as suffragan bishop of Rupert's Land in 1962, and was elected bishop of British Columbia last March.

Ottawa's sorrow at his passing will be matched wherever his good works were known across Canada.



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

New bridges in education

By Christopher Young

The most important, and to my mind the most interesting, aspect of the civic election coming up in nine days' time is the choice of the new Ottawa Board of Education.

Schools are probably the most important responsibility of local government anyway. The quality of our educational system will have greater long-term influence on our city and its people than the roads, sewers and transit systems, important as these may be.

The emphasis is greater this year because we will be choosing a brand new education board to administer a brand new school system.

The election of 17 members to the first Ottawa Board of Education will set the pattern of our school administration for some years to come. The chances are that many of those elected this first time will continue to serve for several terms.

Religious gulf

The integrated board will be responsible for both elementary and secondary schools. Its writ will run throughout Ottawa, Vanier and Rockcliffe. It will deal with both English and French-language schools. Most significant of all, it will build a bridge over the gulf that has always divided the Catholic and the public schools in this community.

Admittedly, this is to be a tenuous and partial bridge. Five of the 17 board members will be elected by separate school supporters, in order to give them a voice in those board decisions that affect high schools beyond the point where tax-supported Catholic schools are allowed by provincial law.

The new Separate School Board will also be a merger, but that is a relatively simpler matter. Ottawa's 91 separate schools and Vanier's eight will be brought under a single board.

If the new education board works smoothly, despite the rather awkward position of the five separate school members with their limited powers, it might point the way to a complete integration of the school systems.

Obsolete system

Such a change would have to spring from the wishes of Catholic parents themselves, but it is quite possible that such a wish will eventually emerge on a consensus basis if the experiment now beginning works out.

The historic rationale of the separate school system is unquestionable, but in this ecumenical age it strikes me as obsolete. Many Catholic parents agree. At least one of the ablest candidates for the separate school positions on the new education board is personally opposed to the whole separate school system.

A change to a universal system seems desirable on grounds of cost and quality, but more importantly because the old Ontario tradition reinforces divisions in the community at a formative level and in an undesirable way. Children are separated and shunted off in different directions from the age of five, and this separation can lead to misunderstanding and hostility in adult life.

This is why the recent declaration of policy by Ontario Liberal Leader Robert Nixon, proposing an extension of the separate school system through Grade 13, strikes me as a step in exactly the wrong direction. Liberals contesting the Toronto school board elections have rejected this policy, although that city today is more Catholic than ever before.

If the swing is to be away from Mr. Nixon's plan and in the direction of a unified system, the public schools will have to eliminate their residual Protestantism.

The public school system is formally non-denominational, but religion is taught largely at the whim of the individual teacher. In many cases what is taught, consciously or unconsciously, is Protestant doctrine.

This is offensive to Jews and other non-Christians and to those Catholic parents who send their children to the public schools by choice. It is probably an important barrier to the dissolution of the separate school system.

Jewish answer

The Jewish answer to the question of religious education seems to me the best one in the circumstances: let all the children go to school together; let those whose parents want them to have doctrinal instruction go to special classes after four.

Such a system does not divide the children. Nor does it deny their right to learn the faith of their fathers.

How about lifetime licences for cars?

The Vancouver Sun

Now that the B.C. government has been converted to the logic of the automobile licence plate that will be good for three years — a five-year plate will follow and then, probably, one valid for the life of the car — the only question is why it has taken so long.

Traffic police, of course, prefer annual licence plates that alternate color schemes because of ease of identification. But economically, the annual plate has never made sense.

Four years ago, which was the last time we checked, this fashionable retooling was costing the government almost $600,000 in manufacturing and administration a year, and the figure probably is closer to a cool million now.

Every April, tons of perfectly good enamelled metal were turfed into the garbage. Every April, licence plate purchasers had to queue like cattle before motor vehicle branch clerks who never were in sufficient supply to give adequate service. Every March 1, police would go through the parody of ticketing the slowpokes who hadn't quite got around to crashing the lineups.

If the new alphabetical prefix weren't restricted to three letters, we'd suggest an ideal combination would spell hurrah.

Diversity

Figures made public a few weeks ago showed clearly that farm income in Manitoba is higher this year than last year only because of diversification. The $15 million drop in income experienced by the grain farmers was more than made up by an $18 million increase in cash returns to livestock producers and row-crop farmers.

These figures should give added impetus to government and agricultural leaders to persuade wheat farmers to switch to other forms of production. — *Winnipeg Tribune.*

READERS' VIEWS

One man's way of deciding how to cast his vote

Editor, Citizen: One of the candidates for Ottawa board of education asked how it was possible to make an enlightened decision about the policies of 27 candidates, with sufficient precision to vote confidently for 12.

As a taxpayer, I would like to tell all concerned that this is not a momentous decision.

I merely assess the statements of the candidates and those who are concerned with the financial burden the taxpayer is carrying, and have some policy of financial priorities consistent with adequate budgeting, will get my vote.

I have heard enough about the "pie in the sky" type of operation and I think we have sufficient progressive educational facilities to digest at present without looking for further technological extravagances.

I think I speak for others when I contemplate the $52,000,000 budget, a breakdown of which I have never seen, when I say we are vitally concerned with holding the line. I am aware that many well meaning people are seeking office and I would suggest that the public is entitled to a balanced sheet annually and progressive budgeting. I don't know any other $50,000,000 business where you can get elected to office without definite fiscal objectives.

J. A. FRODSHAM
Ottawa.

Use for canal

Editor, Citizen: It's time to drain the Rideau Canal again, and the warning has gone out to parents to keep their children away from the canal because of the danger of falling through thin ice over its deeper parts.

Wouldn't it be a thought to fill in these holes with a few loads of stone, or grade the canal to one level while it is empty and before the snow arrives?

Once the ice does form, the canal and Dow's Lake could be used safely for public skating. This could be carried further, maybe once a week, when lights and music could be centred around the Dow's Lake portion, and hot drinks and hot dogs made available at a charge.

With recreation and entertainment becoming more expensive, this project would be welcomed by a great number of Ottawa citizens.

DELORES B. MacDONALD
Ottawa.

This is art?

Editor, Citizen: While visiting the National Gallery I was amused by Warhol's "Brillo", a group of eight cubes with advertisements stencilled on them — then horrified to notice that in these times of government austerity the gallery had actually purchased this exhibit.

Could somebody please inform me what contribution to art this exhibit makes? How much did the gallery pay for the eight cubes and who was responsible for the purchase?

(Mrs.) BRENDA WINCHESTER
Ottawa.

Thanks

The Citizen has received letters of thanks from the following:

Mrs. Don B. Reid, convener, Quota Club of Ottawa.

Mrs. Marsha Leiken, chairman, Ottawa section, National Council of Jewish Women.

Mrs. F. J. Richardson, Kiwanis Ladies' Club.

J. K. Clarke, general manager, Ottawa Winter Fair.

Mrs. W. H. Edwards, secretary, Unity Temple No. 17, Pythian Sisters.

Mrs. Sylvia Haltrecht, general convener, Ottawa Civic Symphony women's committee.

No illusions

Editor, Citizen: Apropos the Lynch and King columns on Remembrance Day, the generation that fought World War Two had no illusions about the glory of war. Neither had the civilians who died in the front lines from London to Berlin to Stalingrad to Hiroshima.

Every war brings to the surface the strutting militarist who struts in peacetime in another guise. But these were a minority.

Remembrance Day for those who have actually been exposed to war has always been a day of sadness and rededication to the promotion of peace. If war has a simple cause—and of course it does not — that could be labelled economics. But if we look to the economists to deliver us from war, heaven help us, for they are, if anything, more muddleheaded and malicious than "the military."

But while waiting for the solution, any peacenik who is sufficiently sincere to back his opinions with his money could join the World Federalists, who have an Ottawa branch.

There are, by the way, a number of "old sweats" among the World Federalists. They are still trying to do their duty as they see it, just as they tried back in the years from '14 to '18 and from '39 to '45.

(Mrs.) MARGARET E. WRIGHT
Ottawa.

Don't forget

Editor, Citizen: Those in favor of doing away with Remembrance Day need reminding that it is thanks to those whose sacrifice they dismiss so lightly, and to those old and middle-aged men who remain, that they are free to express their opinions. If we as a nation cannot spare a few moments each year to pay tribute to our war dead, we do not deserve the freedom they bought for us.

Of course war is horrible, but what alternative was there when faced with monsters like Hitler?

As for glory, I personally am very proud of the bravery and devotion shown by our servicemen when our country was in peril.

Let us not forget those who survived the horror, and dig a little deeper into our pockets to raise pensions for the disabled and the widows of those who never returned. The money wasted on the Company of Young Canadians should go to the vets. They earned any money they get.

DEREK A. W. LODER
Ottawa.

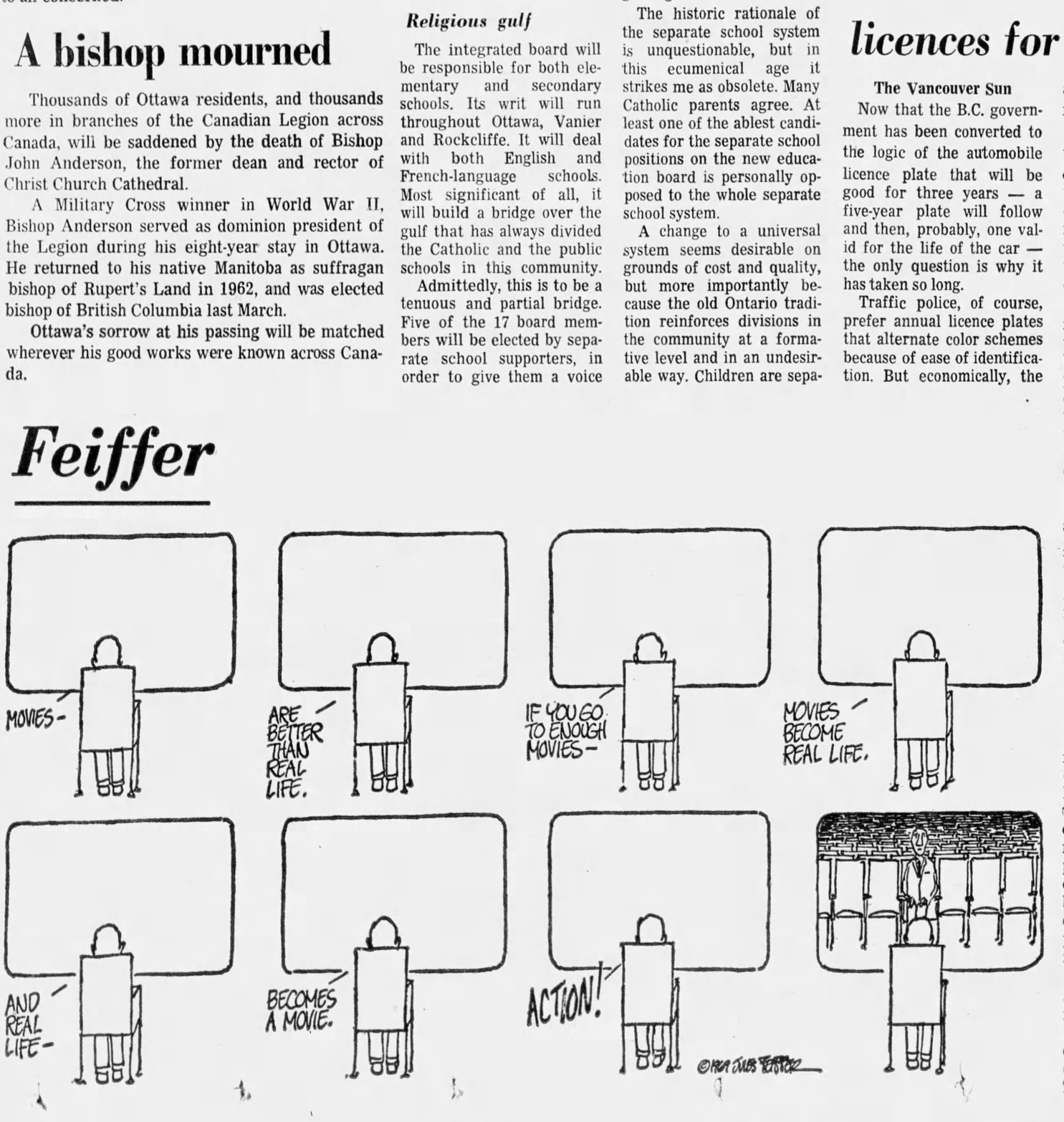
His own choice

Editor, Citizen: I would like to set the record straight regarding my transfer from the student placement office at St. Patrick's College after I publicly criticized the department of manpower and immigration's spending of $250,000 on an advertising campaign for summer jobs in April, 1969.

I was not transferred to a Toronto department as a result of this incident as reported in the press on Nov. 8, but was transferred to the head office of the department in Ottawa. In October I requested a transfer to Toronto.

JAMES P. KELLY
Ottawa.

Feiffer



A note to correspondents

The Citizen publishes only signed correspondence. No pseudonyms are permitted. Writers are requested to provide their address and telephone number to facilitate checking for authenticity and accuracy. These details will not be published. All letters are subject to editing for length, general interest and good taste. They should be limited to a maximum of 200 words.